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C O N F I D E N T I A L KHARTOUM 000313

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DEPT FOR D, AF A/S FRAZER, AF/SPG, AF/SE WILLIAMSON, NSC
FOR BPITTMAN AND CHUDSON

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TAGS: PGOV PREL PREF PHUM SU

SUBJECT: ABYEI'S MISSERIYA LEADERS TELL THEIR SIDE OF THE
STORY

REF: A. KHARTOUM 308

1B. KHARTOUM 256

Classified By: CDA Alberto Fernandez, Reason: Section 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) SUMMARY: On March 3, eight hereditary leaders of the Oulad Kamal branch of the Misseriya Arab tribe of Kordofan told CDA Fernandez that they would appreciate urgent U.S. mediation for Abyei, that their tribe is not a "puppet of the NCP," and that the SPLA needs to immediately withdraw south of the 1956 border or violence will continue. The Misseriya leaders also gave their account of the March 1st clash which, according to them, was started by aggressive SPLA units near the Kiir River in Abyei and resulted in 33 "members of our family passing away." The Misseriya also criticized the ABC report, requested more USAID funding, and invited the CDA to "come to Abyei and Muglad so you can see the real story of what is going on there." END SUMMARY.

12. (U) The following individuals were present:

- Amir Mukhtar B. Nimir
- General Mahdi Babo Nimir
- Kamil B. Nimir
- Haidr B. Nimir
- Nimir B. Nimir
- CDA Fernandez
- Econoff notetaker

33 DEAD FROM Bahr Al-Arab CLASH

13. (C) In contrast to SPLA accounts (ref a) the Oulad Kamal Misseriya described themselves as victims of SPLA aggression on March 1, claiming that 33 of their relatives were "martyred" and 72 others were injured. (Note: On March 3, SPLM Misseriya MP Mohamed Guor told Econoff that the clash was caused half by a trigger-happy SPLA and half by NCP fear mongering among the Misseriya. End Note) One member of the Nimr family stated that the clash occurred between Misseriya and the SPLA forces at approximately 7:30 am on March 1st. He stated that the individuals involved, "were just children, not older than 20 years old." He said that there were approximately 400 Misseriya involved in the fighting (200 with rifles, 200 with sticks, and 6 on horses) and that no Sudanese Armed Forces were with them. "When your family dies, what are you going to do? You are left with no choice but to fight" said Amir Mukhtar Nimir. He described the Misseriya "like your Red Indians, we are being used up until no more of us will be left."

"WE ARE NOT IN THE NCP'S POCKET"

¶4. (C) According to these Nimir representatives, the Misseriya belong to a number of political parties, and only the minority of the Misseriya ("a scratch amount of us") are actually aligned with the NCP. CDA Fernandez stated that many officials in the GoSS have the perception (even if it is incorrect) that the Misseriya are supported by the NCP and that if the SPLA leaves the area, the Dinka Ngok will be attacked by the PDF and/or SAF. Amir Mukhtar B. Nimir responded that he recognizes these perceptions, but that the Misseriya have lived peacefully with the Dinka Ngok before, and that if left to themselves, they will be able to coexist.

The SPLA units were outsiders trying to create facts on the ground and seizing every water source available for future Dinka resettlement while prohibiting Misseriya cattle from drinking. He noted that "we are poor, the roads in our area are unpaved, we know that Khartoum discriminates if you are not one of the favored (three riverine Arab) tribes, we suffer from that."

"SPLA NEED TO GO SOUTH"

¶5. (C) Amir Mukhtar Nimir emphatically stated that the SPLA are north of the 1956 border in violation of the CPA, and should immediately return or face continued violence. He claimed that the Misseriya, "even when the water dries up," do not go south of this border, and that the presence of the heavily-armed SPLA is a clear provocation. Another Nimir family member stated, "Anything could happen if this is not quickly resolved. We need to have some movement on this." All noted that, despite their despair, they were ready to die for this land no matter what deal the two political parties may arrive at. They noted that the Dinka Ngok were not really from Abyei "they came from Upper Nile about two hundred years ago" and other Dinka, who are quite possessive

of their land, refused to give them land saying "you are guests of the Misseriya." Dinka Ngok leaders like Deng Alor know that they will have no land for themselves and no status if they don't take what they can in Abyei.

"CAN THE U.S. BE A MEDIATOR?"

¶5. (C) Amir Mukhtar Nimir stated that he respects the US's ability to serve as a mediator in this conflict and would appreciate immediate U.S. involvement on this issue. He stated that the U.S. could start an initiative, even if it is not initially welcomed by the SPLM and NCP "at the level of the people." CDA Fernandez stated that the U.S. is ready to serve as a mediator in the conflict if all parties agree to this, adding that this was presented to Foreign Minister Deng Alor and Presidential Advisor Ismail in their February visit to Washington. He said, however, that GoS officials have not been responsive to U.S. mediation offers and that it would not be possible for the U.S. to attempt to serve as a mediator without explicit GoS consent.

ABC REPORT

¶6. (C) Despite their calls for U.S. mediation, all of the leaders strongly criticized the Abyei Boundary Commission (ABC) report as biased against the Misseriya from the beginning. (Note: In an earlier meeting (ref b), SPLM-loyalist Guor also stated that the Misseriya never will accept the ABC report. End Note.) One representative stated that "the experts report is the worst basis for any negotiation." Continuing, he stated that one of the authors of the report, Douglas Johnson, was virulently anti Arab and showed that he was biased for the South as he later served as a consultant for the GoSS. Despite his relatives calls for the U.S. to serve as a mediator, Haidr Nimir stated that "We think the U.S. in general has a very biased view of Abyei and falsely labels us as aggressors." Despite this, the Nimir clan claimed that "no tribe in Sudan, not even in the South, is as favorably disposed to the U.S. as the Misseriya, because of Chevron's good work."

OIL

17. (C) The Misseriya leaders did not appear receptive to suggestions to separate land and oil negotiations for Abyei "as any issues about land will actually be about oil." Several representatives also emphatically stated that Abyei has "more oil than all of the rest of Sudan" and that many of Abyei's problems can be attributed to foreign and domestic interest in this resource. CDA Fernandez quickly replied that the U.S. is perhaps the only country that does not have oil interests in Sudan, as evidenced by Chevron's exit from Sudan following pressure by the USG and activist groups. The leaders also said that, in addition to oil, the issue of a separate state for the Misseriya (even if it is not part of a final solution for the region) should be part of the discussion on the future of the Misseriya.

COMMENT

18. (C) With a lavish buffet, a litany of praise for the CDA, and promises to keep in contact with the U.S. Embassy and facilitate a visit to the region, the Oulad Kamal Misseriya were clearly attempting to cozy up to the U.S. and present a different picture of their people. Strangely, the Misseriya appeared rather cheery given the previous day's tragic events and their claim that they had just lost 33 relatives (plus 34 wounded). Although we interpret everything that was said with some skepticism, these influential leaders will be an important part of an final resolution to Abyei. It is certainly true that, even if they are being manipulated by the NCP, the Misseriya of today be more victims than victimizers of the larger struggle between the two powers in the land, the NCP and SPLM. Their discourse, containing all the usual elements of an aggrieved ethnic minority heard from the Balkans to the Middle East, should raise alarm bells about the possibility of an early solution on Abyei, even if the two parties agree. Certainly, the fact that they pleaded for something - American intervention - that the National Congress Party has repeatedly rejected gives some level of verisimilitude to their tragic tale.

FERNANDEZ